

A

LETTER

To an Honourable

Member of Parliament, concerning the great Growth of
POPERY, and the Treasonable Practices of
the *Romish Bishops and Priests*, at this time, in
England.

SIR,

IN the last Conversation I had with You, You were pleas'd to tell me, You had read the late *Appeal to all Protestant Kings, Princes and Stats*; that You were satisfy'd of the very great Danger of the Protestant Religion abroad, and of the Cruelties and Barbarities that have been and are us'd against It in several Parts of Christendom; but that You hop'd the Protestant Religion is safe in *England*, and we have nothing to fear from Popery *here*. As to this last I was altogether of another Mind, and think I can shew I had very great Reason so to be.

It was no Dispute betwixt us, Whether Popery be as pernicious to the Civil Rights, as the Religious Concerns of this Nation; or a Regard was had to Both These in all the Laws which the Wisdom of Parliaments hath from time to time made against Popery. We both allow'd the Necessity and the Sufficiency of those Laws: but whether all those Laws are not now asleep, will not along be a Dispute betwixt us.

To secure this Nation from the Idolatries of Popery, and the Usurpations of the Bishops of *Rome* upon the Rights of this Kingdom, it was found necessary by the Wisdom of our Parliaments to make very strict Laws against Both; especially when the Bishops of *Rome* had the Impudence to issue out their Bulls to deprive *Q. Elizabeth* of glorious Memory of her Crown, and to Absolve all Her Subjects from their Alliance to Her.

By some of these Laws it is Treason (a) for any Popish Bishop, Priest or Jesuit, &c. either to come into *England*, or remain here; and Felony for any knowingly to receive or relieve them here. But to what purpose are these Laws now? The three Popish Bishops made in the late Popish Reign do still continue here, and exercise their pretended Jurisdictions, as if they were in *Italy* it self. They have canton'd our Kingdom into *Provinces*; and as their pretended Bp. *Leyborn* has *London*, and the Counties about it for his share, so their Bp. *Gifford* has the *West* and *Wales*; and their Bp. *Smith* the *Northern* Parts; where they exercise all the Parts of their Functions without controul. It's too well known that this last Summer Bp. *Gifford* went confirming through *Wales*; and that they boast of the many Hundreds He confirm'd then.

And for Priests and Jesuits, do they not now swarm all over the Nation, especially in and about *London*? And so much, that it cannot be deny'd that there are more Popish Priests in *England* at this time, than were in the late Popish Reign it self; and at the same time of the *Assassination Plot*, 50 Priests are known to have come over in one Week.

Give me leave to ask now, Whether You think there can be one Popish Lord or Gentleman in *England* without a Popish Priest in his House, when it cannot be deny'd that there are at least 100 Jesuits, 1500 Franciscans, and proportionably of the Benedictines, Dominicans, Capuchins, Carmelites, and of yearly



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the Secular Priests at this time in *England*. They have their Provincials and other Superiors; they keep in one Popish Great Man's House or other their yearly Synods and Visitations, and hold their Triennial Chapters for the choosing those Provincials, &c. and are in as much method *her* as even in *Rome* or *France*. And one would think from these their Numbers, and Practices, that there are no more Laws against them in *England*, than in *Rome* or *France*. Has not (to trouble You with no more Names at present) that infamous Jesuit *Peters* (Brother to the famous Privy-councillor) who tore our English Bible in his Pulpit in *Lincoln-street* in the late Popish Reign, continu'd in *England* ever since, liv'd at *Marrybone* under the Name of *Spencer*, and is at the Head of all the Jesuits affairs at this Day here?

(b) 23 Eliz. c. 1. sect. 4. By the Wisdom of our Parliaments Laws were also made to forbid absolutely any Popish Worship in *England*; to say Mass is the Forfeiture (b) of 200 Marks with one Year's Imprisonment, and to hear Mass is the Forfeiture of 100 Marks with a Year's Imprisonment; and yet, in despite of all your Laws, what Numbers of Mass-houses are up and down this Kingdom at this time! And what publick Resort is there every where to 'em in *London*, in *Tork*, in *Winchester*, in *Durham*, not to mention more Places now! And what Crouds may be seen any Sunday-morning in *Lincoln's Inn-Fields*.

I am assur'd there are but few Parishes in *London*, wherein Mass is not said every Sunday; and I may affirm that to You, which will startle You very much, There are more Masses said in a Sunday-forenoon in *London* and *Westminster*, than the Church of *England* Services in all the Parish-Churches within the Bills of Mortality put together. And the Levying the Fines of this one Act upon the Papists for the Term of the last Year only, would have rais'd so much Money, as would not only pay off that great Debt which the ingenious Dr. *Davenant* has very judiciously computed the Nation to be in, but prevent laying one Farthing of Tax upon the Nation for Seven Years to come.

(c) 13 Eliz. c. 2. sect. 7. Is it not, Sir, a Poemunire by our Laws (c), either to bring into *England*, or to receive any *Agnus Dei's*, Beads, or such Popish Trinkets? Is it not the Forfeiture of 40 Shillings either to sell or buy here any one Popish Psalter, Manual, Rosarie, or Office whatever (d)? and yet these things are brought in, bought and sold as publickly, as Toys or Books are in *Westminster-hall* in Term-time: sometimes in the Hall, sometimes in the Court, and sometimes before the very Gates of a certain House, which was not long since a Franciscan Covent. Alas, Sir, Popery is so far from being bashful here, that it's not content barely to make nothing of your Laws, but can with scorn trample upon them. What less is the Papists resorting publickly, in Crouds, as it were in Processions? as almost all *King's-street* know they did but last *October* 13th, into the Cathedral of *Westminster* it self; and there, in the Face of the Sun, paid their Superstitious Devotions at the Shrine of *Edward the Confessor*.

(d) 2 Fac. 1. c. 9. sect. 25. That just Detestation against Popery, which the whole Nation had entertain'd, made it the Care of Parliaments to prevent any of the Subjects being perverted to that Religion. They wisely consider'd that there could not be a Convert made to Popery without losing a Subject to the Government; and in our Days this must hold truer than ever, there being not one Native Papist, or Popish Convert, I dare say, that does not perfectly hate the present Government. Such Considerations made our Parliaments more than once to Enact That it should be Treason (e) in any one to turn another, or to be turn'd to the Popish Religion here; and Misprision of Treason for any that were Aiders or Maintainers in it. But are there still, Sir, such Laws in *England*, when it's the daily Endeavour of above Thousands in *England* to make Converts to Popery? and they can glory of the Numbers they have made. The Popish Bishops and Priests are every where at Liberty to make what Converts they can. There are not fewer than twenty Priests about one Chappel in *L. I. Fields* every Sunday, part of whose Business is to say the Masses, and another part to make Converts. Have they not carried their Converts in triumph to their Mass at *Durham*? Do they not brag at the Sisters Lane's Mass-house, or rather Nunnery, in *Winchester*, (in the very Face of the Cathedral) of the

(e) 23 Eliz. c. 1. sect. 2, 3. 1 Fac. 1. c. 4. sect. 1.

the Converts they make there? And, to omit forty [more Instances, cannot the Father *James* at *Somerset-house*, and the two *Irish* Fryars *Nugent* alias *Lucas*, and *Offing* alias *Fenn* at the Convent in *L. I. Fields*, glory of the Converts they have made, and are, in contempt of all your Laws, daily making? *Newgate* it self cannot escape ther Diligence; and the *Irish* *Counel* can give a good Account of his Industry, if not of his Success *there*.

Upon the mention of these three *Irish* Priests, give me leave to ask what You think the *French* King would say to it, if my Lord *Manchester*, instead of One Chaplain He has with him, had entertain'd Twelve or Fourteen *French* Protestant Ministers, whose Business should have been chiefly to baptize, visit the Sick, and give the Communion up and down *Paris*, and to make what Converts they could from Popery? There is more than one Gentleman in *England*, that knows the reason of such a Question here. And the taking up of Dr. *Wickart* (when Chaplain with my Lord *Portland*) by the Lieutenant *Criminal* at *Paris*, on a false Information, gives us an Answer also from *France*—But to return to their Triumphs *here* about their Converts, it would be unpardonable to omit the late triumphant Reception that was made for the Lord *Baltamor's* Son's Lady at the *Franciscan* Chappel, how it was strew'd with Flowers, &c. for her first coming there. Nay, so busie and so furious is their Zeal *now*, that a Convert from Popery goes in dang'r of his Life in *England*; and the late Spiriting away of the poor *Spanish* and *Portugeſe* Converts tells you very plainly, what they dare do now, as well as their impudent Persecution of Dr. *Conner* at his dying Hours; as Dr. *H.* of *St. Giles's* can tell you more at large.

Would You, or your Houses of Parliament, think fit to inquire into the Number of Converts to Popery, made within this thirty or forty Years past, I believe it would startle You far more than this Letter can. It's true, You would not find them all *here*; for That is another part of their Care, as well as of their Contempt of all your Laws, that they send most of 'em away to their Popish Seminaries abroad; and they dare brag that scarce a Week passes, in which they do not send either a born Papist or a Popish Convert to some of 'em: And the Jesuit *Peters* alias *Spencer* has a very considerable part in this Charge.

And are not these theſe Popish Seminaries as great an Affront to your Laws as any of the rest? What Care has not the Wisdom of Parliaments taken to prevent any of our Subjects being sent for Popish Education abroad! The Laws in this respect are so strict and severe, that any one that reads them would conclude, that the greatest Papist in *England* durst not send a Child abroad to be so educated; much more that no Man durst either make Converts to Popery, or send any of them to their Popish Seminaries.

But for all this, they send 'em constantly abroad, both Sons and Daughters, both Papists born, and Popish Converts; and are breeding them up there for the continual Disturbance of our Nation; and make of their Converts the very worst Firebrands of all; as the Jesuit *Parsons* did prove, and I fear the late *Madman* Convert will. Nor have they such Popish Seminaries only abroad, this would be too small a Contempt of You and your Laws, if they did not keep up some here under our own Noses. They have their Popish Schools in *London*, and too many other places; they have their Nunneries, at *Tork* for instance and at *Hamerſmith*; and their latter Nuns, live in hopes of better Accommodations at a Noble House not far from them, which I think is called *Sion-House*, and they say belongs to the Nuns of *St. Brigit*.

I was not willing to trouble You with too long a Letter, especially in Parliament-time, or I should have instanc'd in more Matters, and particularly about those good Men the Jesuits, whose Estate in *England* is not computed at less than 30000 *l. per An.* And would You not think it strange, if these Jesuits, by their Agent *B.* should be at this very time the Farmers of the Markets of the City of *London* it self, and cruelly exacting upon the poor People there?

This is the State of Popery now in *England*, and these are their Practices;

And now, Sir, I will again ask You, is there no Danger of the Protestant Religion here? Is there no Fear of Popery in England, when it is making so great a Progress among us? When the Popish Priests now swarm throughout the Kingdom: When their Masses are publick almost every where, and frequented as openly, as if *theirs* was, and not *ours*, the Establish'd Religion of the Country; When they compass every Part and Place of England to make their Converts, and glory so much in their Numbers of them, and send 'em to their Popish Seminaries and Convents abroad.

What could they do *more*, if *theirs* was the Establish'd Religion of the Nation; as they hope e'er long to see it, and declare they do not fear Accomplishing their great Design in the Way they are now in. In a little time they hope to take possession again of all their Rights, as they call 'em; of the Estates of our Nobility and Gentry that are upon Abby-Lands; and of the Cathedrals and Churches of our Clergy. Their Bishop *Leyborn* lies ready in *Queens-street* to take possession of *Lambeth house*; and their Bishop *Smith* is as ready for that of *Tork*; where his Silver Crozier was in the late Reign prepared for him; and Bishop *Gifford* is ready to plant at *Litchfield* or *Worcester*; for He will not go nearer *Bath* for old *Luellin's* sake, who is there already.

What is the Reason I pray, Sir, when these things are really so, of the general Silence in England about Popery? Have we forgot all their Plots and Conspiracies, and even the last *Assassination* One? Have we forgot their Practices in the late Reign, and how near the Destruction of the Protestant Religion, and of all our Rights and Liberties was *then*? and how inevitable this was, without that miraculous Deliverance which we received by his present Majesty? Whom God long preserve. What is the meaning of the unaccountable Insensibility we are now under? Were we mistaken *then*; and is Popery, which then, and ever till now, was so idolatrous, and superstitious and cruel, and tyrannical and intolerable, become a holy, innocent, harmless, inoffensive Perswasion at last? No, no, Sir, Popery is Popery *still*, Our constant implacable Enemy; and, if We will not take care of our selves, it will take care of us, in such a way, as will make all our Hearts to bleed; in a Way that will be the Ruin of all our Laws, of all our Rights and Estates, as well, as of our Holy Religion; and when This is gone, let the other go for me.

Where is your Love to your Religion, your Country, your Laws and your Property, if you can tamely look on, and suffer all these Affronts from Popery to Every One of Them? From you in Parliament We must expect Redress in this imminent Danger; and if You will not help us in *such* a terrible Circumstance, I am sure You will acknowledge, that you can never answer this careless Unconcern to God, or your own Consciences, or to your Country: And especially since you have the greatest Encouragement imaginable to do your utmost for the putting an Effectual Stop to the Growth of Popery, when you consider *Who* now sits on the Throne, *viz.* not only a Protestant, but a King to whom, under God, we owe our Preservation from Popery; and who hath signalized His Zeal and Courage for the Protestant Religion and Interest, incomparably beyond any King, or Prince, in *Christendom*.

You cannot expect, or be pleas'd with, any Apology for the Freedom of this Letter from,

SIR,

London,
Jan. 15. 99.

Your most Affectionate, Humble Servant, R. W.

